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Between Lines™

The Family Issue

Love, Transformed

By Chris Azzopardi

'Bachelor' Colton Underwood Talks 'Daddyhood' Podcast

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Julianna and Judy Wilson with their daughters.
Photo: Andrew Potter

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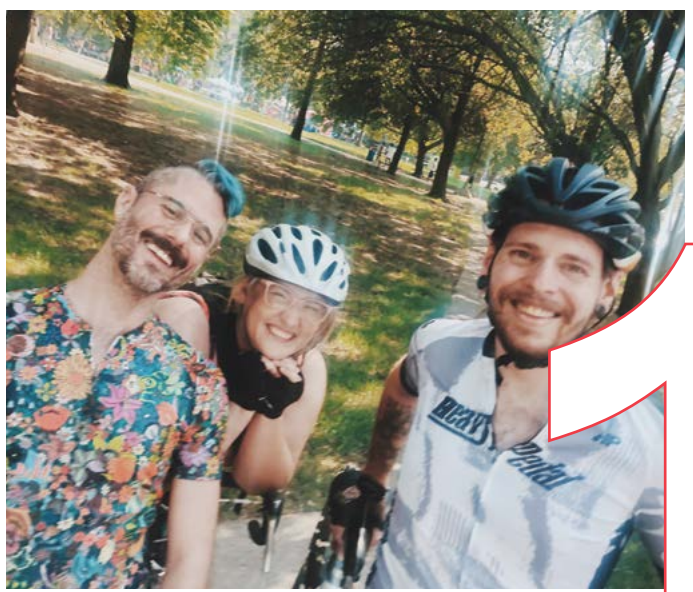
5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY LIAM CLYMER

Are you feeling like you just fell out of a coconut tree? Does the context in which you exist happen to be dazed and feature a throbbing headache? No one can blame you. Over the last couple of weeks, amongst brat edits and shattered fundraising records, Kamala Harris has launched her campaign for the presidency with enthusiasm. However, after a series of political events, each more stunning than the last, it's hard to not feel a bit overwhelmed. If you're looking to find a moment to recollect yourself to better prepare for the ever-important election coming in November, then you're in the right place. Express your emotions through music, pedal your cares away with Cruise: Detroit or just relax and sink into a queer board game night.



Cruise: Detroit participants. Photo: Jeremey Isaacson

1 Go For a LGBTQ+ Bike Ride with Cruise: Detroit

When fun music is blaring and the sights of Detroit are surrounding you, it's easy to forget that you're actually doing cardio. Cruise: Detroit is a queer cycling group that plans rides in and around the Detroit area. Cruise: Detroit assures that no disrespectful or hateful behavior is tolerated and that they maintain a safe space through active support. Admin Justin Fenwick told BTL that their rides are accessible for all. "We are a bi-monthly-ish queer meander on bikes," Fenwick said. "Cruise rides at an accessible speed of 10-12 mph and travel distances range from 10-15 miles with stops made during rides." There's one planned ride remaining for August, just around the corner.

Aug. 11, 1 p.m., meeting at Drifter Coffee (770 Woodward Heights, Ferndale) and riding to Hazel Park Pride. Learn more at bit.ly/3SwwjaY.

2 Express Yourself with Write Hear 4 Queer

Being queer is an experience unique to each individual — everyone has their own story. So why not try expressing it via writing in a queer-friendly space? Through writing exercises, prompts and optional sharing, Lansing-based Write Hear 4 Queer promises to provide an open space for writers of all levels and orientations. Write Hear 4 Queer assures that events like these aren't just a way to flex your creative muscles, but are also an active part of "creating community." Meet new people within your area and unleash the soul of a poet that every queer person has lingering inside!

Aug. 11, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Salus Center (408 S. Washington Square, Lansing). More details at bit.ly/3SzsK3H.

Game night at Opal Grove Games. Courtesy photo

3 Unwind at a Queer Game Night

Nestled in the heart of Detroit is Opal Grove Games, a small business focused on making games accessible to anyone. Every third Friday of the month, Opal Grove hosts Queer Game Night, proving their founding philosophy through action. Owner and organizer Ben Lippi told BTL that their goal is to support the community that supports them. "We started doing Queer Game Night earlier this year as a way to build community," they said. "Queer folks are under a lot of stress and a lot of our connection to other queer folks is often through the lens of support. That's definitely important, but we wanted to do what we can to provide an opportunity for queer joy too."

Aug. 16, 6 p.m., Opal Grove Games (3546 Michigan Ave., Detroit). Learn more at opalgrovegames.com/pages/queer-game-night.

4

Rock Out with Unicorn Uprising Studios

Detroit-based Unicorn Uprising Studios promises "music education for us, by us." The organization is currently offering free beginner guitar lessons to disabled and LGBTQ+ people, with instructors available to travel to you. Unicorn's goal is to create a safe environment that fosters music learning that translates into increased visibility of disabled and LGBTQ+ musicians. If you're interested in pursuing music or have an interest in volunteering to teach yourself, then look no further.

Dates and locations varying based on scheduling needs. Sign up at bit.ly/4d5G6gs.

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5

Transgender Michigan co-founders Susan Crocker and Rachel Crandall Crocker at a past Transgender Pride in the Park. Photo: BTL archives

Attend Michigan Pride Events Over The Next Few Weeks

There are plenty of opportunities to celebrate Pride across the state of Michigan in August — whether it be standing with your trans siblings or showing up for queer youth. Check out the details:

Sunday, Aug. 11
- Stand With Trans Annual Family Picnic. Royal Oak, 12-3 p.m.
- Hazel Park Pride. 620 W Woodward Heights, Hazel Park, 12-7 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 17
- Macomb County Pride (Mount Clemons). Downtown Mount Clemons, 12-6 p.m.
- Vermontville Youth Pride. 108 N. Main St., Vermontville, 12-7 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 24
- Transgender Pride in the Park. Martin Road Park (1900 Orchard Ave., Ferndale), 12–6 p.m.

Meet the Influencer Helping Stand with Trans Go Viral

Sander Jennings on why short-form video is key to growing non-profit brands

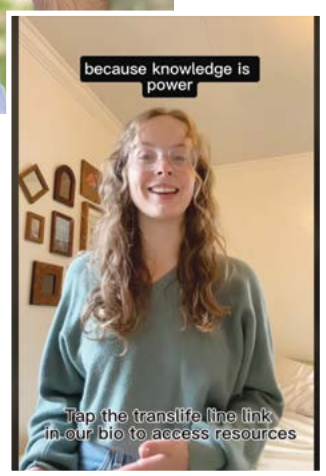
BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

A new partnership between Stand with Trans and a digital marketing strategist with a penchant for social media is off to a promising start, including a viral TikTok sure to help the Michigan-based organization establish a larger national footprint. For said communications director Sander Jennings, the creative force driving the renewed public relations focus at Stand with Trans, it's an approach rooted in common sense.

"Stand with Trans does so much incredible work for the community," Jennings tells BTL, "but if people don't know about it and no one is seeing it…"

Jennings, who personally has 800,000-plus followers on TikTok and over 263,000 on Instagram, applies classic marketing techniques to his modern communications methodology. One example is a TikTok pinned to the Stand with Trans (@standwithtrans) account centered on the organization's Lifeline Library, an online directory of resources for the trans community, allies, family members and anyone seeking knowledge on transgender topics. Jennings explains that while the TikTok about Lifeline Library is informative in and of itself, the post also serves as a "top of the funnel" lead magnet that draws viewers to the Stand with Trans website. "We're actually trying to drive traffic through every single piece of content we publish — every single email and other outreach we do, we're leading people back to our funnel so they can really benefit from what Stand with Trans does," he explains.

Jennings' passion for the Stand with Trans mission is personal — his younger sister is trans advocate Jazz Jennings, who has been in the public spotlight since she was a young child. Her YouTube series "I Am Jazz" led to a TLC reality series of the same name, which has aired for eight seasons since 2015. Jennings says advocating on behalf of his family has been central to carving out his career path. Jazz, he says, has inspired him to keep trying new things and to push through hard times. "I'm grateful that I'm able to support her along the way and to have a best friend through it all," he says. "We inspire each other, and it means a lot to me that she feels inspired by me."



(Above) Sander Jennings. Courtesy photo. (Right) Stand with Trans on TikTok.

Jennings didn't set out to pursue a career in advocacy. "I knew I wanted to be involved with social media and eventually pursue a career as a digital marketer," he explains. "But, essentially, I realized that while I always look at myself as supporting Jazz, I was scared about being judged personally. I was scared to be looked at. I kind of sat within my privileges as a cisgender heterosexual white man, and yes, I was supportive, and I was on the TV show… and then one day, I kind of thought about the power of influence."

Soon after graduating from the University of Florida with his bachelor's degree, Jennings found himself at an influencer-related conference in Las Vegas, where he had an epiphany that led to a master's program focused on digital marketing strategy. "This experience sparked my passion and creativity," he says, citing the event as the moment where he realized that he had a platform combined with a unique position as the sibling to a transgender person. "There are not very many vocal advocates and allies out there using social media and their voice or their passions to create change," he says. "I'm passionate about a bunch of different areas, but the one thing I know about myself is I want to help people in life — that's my number one purpose, and what drove me to start my own agency focused on helping values-based brands, nonprofits and small businesses that have missions or ideas really aimed at helping people."

In addition to his work with Stand with Trans, Jennings and his digital marketing brand DigiEmpower have partnered with brands like gender-neutral clothing brand and philanthropic organization The Phluid Project and Stealth Bros., a company focused on creating products for underrepresented medical communities including people undergoing gender transition.

Phluid Project CEO and founder Rob Smith tells BTL that Jennings is "such an absolute pleasure to work with." Smith says he'd heard about Jennings long before meeting him and has been impressed by his commitment and dedication to both his sister Jazz and the entire LGBTQ+ community. "Once you meet Sander, you realize his passion is authentic and he cares so much about equality and inclusion," Smith adds. "He's also really smart and ambitious and has really helped Phluid identify new possibilities to connect, engage and expand our community. We love Sander."

Jennings' strategy for growing Stand with Trans' impact may hint at an upcoming evolution for similar organizations. "A lot of nonprofits have social media initiatives focused on static images," he explains. "But it's a lot harder to grow, and it takes a lot more time to create than short-form video. Everyone's moving toward this short-form video idea, but a lot of nonprofits miss the mark and are still doing a lot of graphic-based marketing and just posting images. But the way people are consuming content these days is beyond that. It's actually the visuals and the short-term video aspect."

Stand with Trans Executive Director Roz Keith notes that the organization has long employed social media strategies to communicate with a target audience that includes people from different generations. "Stand with Trans needs to reach young people as well as adult caregivers and allies," she explains. "This dual audience requires a strategically tailored approach using a combination of email and social media to get the word out. It is also important to utilize multiple platforms as each has a unique and faithful user base. Working with Sander and the DigiEmpower team allows us to benefit from his expertise as a digital marketing strategist and his significant allyship to the trans community."

One key to success, Jennings says, is amplifying individual voices through personal storytelling, a technique he says impacts the community in important ways and which routinely resonates with viewers. "We've also started to get our board members and team members involved," he adds. "They deserve their flowers and kudos, as well." Recent outreach has included TikToks focused on the Stand with Trans Advisory Board, like a post where a member discusses trans masculinity.

"We want our donors to be able to see how we're actually utilizing their donations without requiring them to read a blog or a static image that really doesn't engage them," Jennings says. "We want to make sure people see that we're doing the work and we're also mixing in education and reaching new people. It's a multi-pronged approach."

‘Looking Good, Feeling Great’

2024 Mr. Trans Michigan Derek Davis gets a beard trim at a recent Stand with Trans event. Photo: Andrew Potter

Stand with Trans workshop in Pleasant Ridge offers opportunity to learn and bond

BY LIAM CLYMER

Outside, abrasive rhetoric and assumptions toward trans individuals are becoming horrifically commonplace in American politics. But inside Common Haus in Pleasant Ridge on the morning of July 28, trans men and transmasculine individuals found a way to escape the noise and have thoughtful conversations on identity. Stand with Trans and Mr. Trans Michigan 2024 Derek Davis partnered to host “Looking Good, Feeling Great,” a discussion focused on transmasculine presentation and prepping.

Davis said simply being present at events like these can showcase hope for younger trans men. “I think it’s important because a lot of kids don’t realize that we [trans individuals] exist — that we do grow up to be successful adults,” Davis said. “We want to try to make their journey easier than ours was.”

The attendees of “Looking Good, Feeling Great” will be the first to say that spaces like these aren’t only for youth. Attendee Luckey Weathers said that the space felt safe and open for all ages. “I’m in my 40s and when I was younger, there was nothing like this,” Weathers said. “It’s amazing. It feels very safe. It feels like a place where you can be natural and not worry about saying something and people not understanding.”

> *“I think we all have a lot of similar experiences and questions that we might only want to ask in a group dynamic of people like this.”*
>
> — “Looking Good, Feeling Great” attendee Luckey Weathers

Davis said he had noticed that there were more gender-affirming events for transfeminine individuals than there were for transmasculine folks. He said he wanted to provide a space for all of those within the transmasculine realm who might not have

See **Looking Good**, page 20

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Catching Up with Former Triangle Foundation Director Sean Kosofsky

BY LIAM CLYMER

Our "Where Are They Now?" series will get you up-to-date on the lives of LGBTQ+ community advocates who have contributed to Michigan with years of tireless activism before embarking on new chapters, whether in retirement or pursuit of fresh opportunities elsewhere. In this space, we'll trace the paths of these trailblazers as they navigate life beyond the limelight, offering insights into their current endeavors, passions and the legacies they continue to shape. Join us as we celebrate their resilience, achievements and the lasting impact they've left on Michigan's LGBTQ+ community.

This time around, Sean Kosofsky is the focus. Kosofsky served as policy and political director for Michigan's Triangle Foundation from 1996 to 2008 and his journey is rooted in social justice and activism, from his career in Michigan to his life today in New York.

From an early age, Kosofsky found himself impassioned by helping others — an interest stemming from a desire to bring joy into the lives of those he interacted with. But as he grew through his work, his own identity and the causes he focused on became more intertwined. Eventually, Kosofsky became a key voice in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights, anti-bullying and reproductive rights at a statewide and national scale. But like many, his story of political engagement and self-understanding began in high school.

How would you describe your connection to activism in Michigan?

I started as an activist in high school, working for the environment. I was also active with the Young Democrats and worked on Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign.

Then, after high school, it became my job. I came out of the closet my senior year because of the Affirmations youth group, which may have saved my life. I never left that group and, eventually, they started paying me. Then, in 1996, I was offered a role at Triangle Foundation [now Equality Michigan]. I eventually became the main political and policy voice for Michigan's LGBTQ+ movement. I was involved in many ballot measures, political advocacy, the ACLU and many other causes while in Michigan. It's where I cut my teeth.

What has your path looked like since moving on from Triangle Foundation?

I worked at Triangle Foundation before the merger with Equality Michigan. I left Michigan in the summer of 2008 and accepted my first executive director position running NARAL [now Reproductive Freedom for All] North Carolina. I was the only man in the country running a NARAL affiliate at the time, and we had a lot of success in those years. Then I was tapped to run a progressive coalition filled with organizations focused on policy and election turnout, called Blueprint North Carolina [The North Carolina equivalent of Michigan Voices]. I was there for four years and was asked to be the co-chair of the statewide ballot measure campaign to defeat the ban on gay marriage in 2012. I also served on the Planned Parenthood statewide political board. Later, I ran a polling organization but then, in 2014, I moved to New York City to be the first executive director for the Tyler Clementi Foundation, where we focused on bullying prevention nationwide.

I moved to San Francisco — for love — in 2017 and started my own consulting practice, now called The Nonprofit Fixer. In 2018, I was tapped to run a national climate change think tank called the Climate Advocacy Lab and was excited to be there when the historic Inflation Reduction Act was passed. It was the largest climate package ever passed by a government body.

Since 2023, I have been solely focused on my consulting work, which focuses on fundraising, board development and executive director training and coaching. I got married in 2019 and former Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm officiated the wedding in Napa. My husband and I are executive producers of "America You Kill Me," which is the story of Jeff Montgomery and the Triangle Foundation, which we helped get a New York City premiere in June.

What are some of your proudest moments related to your non-profit work?

I helped get Gov. Granholm to pass two executive orders protecting LGBTQ+ state employees and helped introduce all the legislation that is now finally passing under Gov. Whitmer.

Pride PAC, which I ran, held the first fundraiser for U.S. Senator Gary Peters when he first ran for Congress. We did that with Gerry Bannister. We sued the City of Detroit and shut down sting operations for years and made them repeal the law they were using to harass gay men. We then used that to get the Michigan State Police to stop sting operations while Granholm was governor.

I am proud that while at NARAL we passed the first comprehensive sex-education law in the South. While at Tyler Clementi Foundation, we introduced federal anti-cyber harassment legislation and worked to stop revenge porn. I also helped create the LGBTQ+ Pride Festival in Raleigh, which is now an annual event.

How does your own identity impact your desire to help others?

All my life work is driven by the experience of the closet and of being queer. I suffered in silence as a teen and don't want anyone else to suffer in silence. It's why I work on abortion, civil rights, queer politics, partisan politics and climate. It all comes down to my own experience and that I want others to have freedom, dignity, joy and prosperity.

What spurred the creation of The Nonprofit Fixer?

To be honest, I was between jobs and just wanted some money coming in. Over time, it kept growing, and it gave me an outlet to learn something new, including business acumen and entrepreneurial skills. It started as a side hustle and now is a thriving business.

Where are you now?

I live in City Hall Park in downtown Manhattan with my husband and dog.

The Michigan Supreme Court is Chosen by The People, the U.S. Supreme Court is Not

The Michigan Supreme Court is the highest court in the state, making decisions on critical issues that impact everyone. It's important to know the citizens of Michigan have the power to elect the people who are entrusted with this vital role in our state government.

During any given term, issues that come before the Michigan Supreme Court can include civil rights, environmental regulations, criminal justice, reproductive rights, gun safety, fair elections, and more. The justices who serve on the court help shape Michigan's future, reviewing over 2,000 appeals every year and choosing the most complex, significant cases to help ensure a just and fair outcome.

Michigan is one of only 24 states that empowers voters to elect state Supreme Court justices, which is a civic duty as important as any choice you make on your ballot.

This is completely different from United States Supreme Court justices, who are nominated by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Although both the U.S. Supreme Court and the Michigan Supreme Court act as the final authority in interpreting laws and judicial rules at the federal and state level, respectively, there are other differences, too.

Unlike U.S. Supreme Court justices, who serve for life, Michigan Supreme Court justices are elected for eight-year terms. Candidates for the Michigan Supreme Court must be a qualified elector, a licensed Michigan lawyer for five years, and under the age of 70 at the time of their election.

Seven justices serve on the Michigan Supreme Court at a time. When their term is complete, they can run for re-election if they meet the requirements. In 2024, Justice Kyra Harris Bolden is the only incumbent running for re-election. She is the first Black woman to serve on the Michigan Supreme Court, having been appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer in 2022 when a vacancy on the court needed to be filled. That is part of the process in Michigan, and is the only time a Supreme Court justice is appointed and not elected.

Although Justice Bolden may not have been a household name at the time, she previously served in the state House for four years. During her time in the House, Justice Bolden sat on the Judiciary Committee and introduced bipartisan legislation designed to protect citizens' rights. Before that, she was a litigation attorney. These are the kinds of qualifications that ensure that Michigan Supreme Court justices understand the rule of law, the importance of fairness and equity, and demonstrate the level of integrity and education this important role requires.

Supreme Court justices in Michigan must be nominated by a political party, but their political affiliation is not included on voters' ballots. So it's essential to do your homework to understand the values and experience of candidates once they are officially nominated, especially if you want to ensure a balanced court that will protect the rights and freedoms of everyone in Michigan.

This year, Michigan voters will choose who fills two open spots on the Michigan Supreme Court. The votes you cast can make an impact for a generation. That's why it's essential to understand how to vote for Michigan Supreme Court justices.

Even if you vote a straight-party ticket, you must individually cast your vote for justices in the non-partisan section of your ballot. It's easy to find – if you know to be looking for it. So don't stop at the top! Keep going through your entire ballot to vote for two Supreme Court justices in the non-partisan section.

Every election – and every vote – matters. Learn more about your voting rights, get more information about the Michigan Supreme Court, and check out what the non-partisan section of your ballot will look like. Visit www.misupremecourtrocks.com for all this and more.

-Erin Knott, Equality Michigan Executive Director

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Screw J.K. Rowling. Like, Seriously, No Book About Wizards Is Good Enough to Justify Being Transphobic.

BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Let me begin by saying that I hate boxing. I think it's super gross to watch people punch each other in the face for entertainment.

But what I hate even more is transphobia. And the treatment of Algerian boxer Imane Khelif over her competing in the Olympics is truly the grossest.

In case you haven't been following the Olympics, here's the in-a-nutshell version of what happened, as reported by The Advocate: "Italian boxer Angela Carini competed against Khelif in a boxing match at the 2024 Olympic Games. 46 seconds into the fight, however, Carini withdrew from the match and claimed that she was feeling an intense pain in her nose." She then told news outlets that competing with Khelif was "unfair."

Why was it unfair? Well, it's likely that Carini was referencing a decision made in March by the International Boxing Association to exclude Khelif and another boxer, Lin Yu-ting of Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), from competing because they failed a "gender test."

"According to the results of DNA tests, we identified a number of athletes who tried to deceive their colleagues and posed as women. According to the results of the tests, it was proved that they have XY-chromosomes. Such athletes were excluded from the competition," IBA President Umar Kremlev told Russian news outlet Tass. (Hat tip to Google translate!)

> *Once Rowling learned that Khelif is not a man, she apologized.... Ha. Just kidding.*

I may have dropped out of two different biology classes in college, but I know that people with XX chromosomes are generally female, and those with XY chromosomes are generally male. I also know that this is not true for all people all of the time. It's a very narrow reading of biological sex that excludes people who are intersex. Furthermore, many people point to these two little letters in order to declare that "there are only two genders!" and completely ignore the existence of transgender people, not to mention the fact that someone's chromosomes do not dictate someone's gender.

So does Khelif have XY chromosomes? I don't know (also, it's none of my business). But it's clear she doesn't identify as trans.

"The Algerian boxer was born female, was registered female, lived her life as a female, boxed as a female, has a female passport," said International Olympic Committee spokesman Mark Adams, according to The Advocate.

See? Case closed! Now if we can all just move along…

Oh, wait. J.K. Rowling, one of the world's most notorious transphobes, has something to say?

On X, Rowling posted a photo of Khelif and Carini. In the photo Khelif looks like she's patting a crying Carini on the back. But that's not what Rowling sees.

"Could any picture sum up our new men's rights movement better?" Rowling posted. "The smirk of a male who's [sic] knows he's protected by a misogynist sporting establishment enjoying the distress of a woman he's just punched in the head, and whose life's ambition he's just shattered."

Of course, once Rowling learned that Khelif is not a man, she apologized…. Ha. Just kidding.

X user @YourAnonNews posted, "Imane Khelif should sue every single account and outlet saying she is trans. Assholes are putting her life at risk, it is illegal in her country to be trans. The continuance of the blatant trans lie continues unfettered on Twitter."

Rowling responded to ths with, "The idea that those objecting to a male punching a female in the name of sport are objecting because they believe Khelif to be 'trans' is a joke. We object because we saw a male punching a female."

Asshole, indeed.

"Suspicions of cis women as trans aren't new, especially when it comes to women of color," Marie-Adélina de la Ferrière writes in The Advocate.

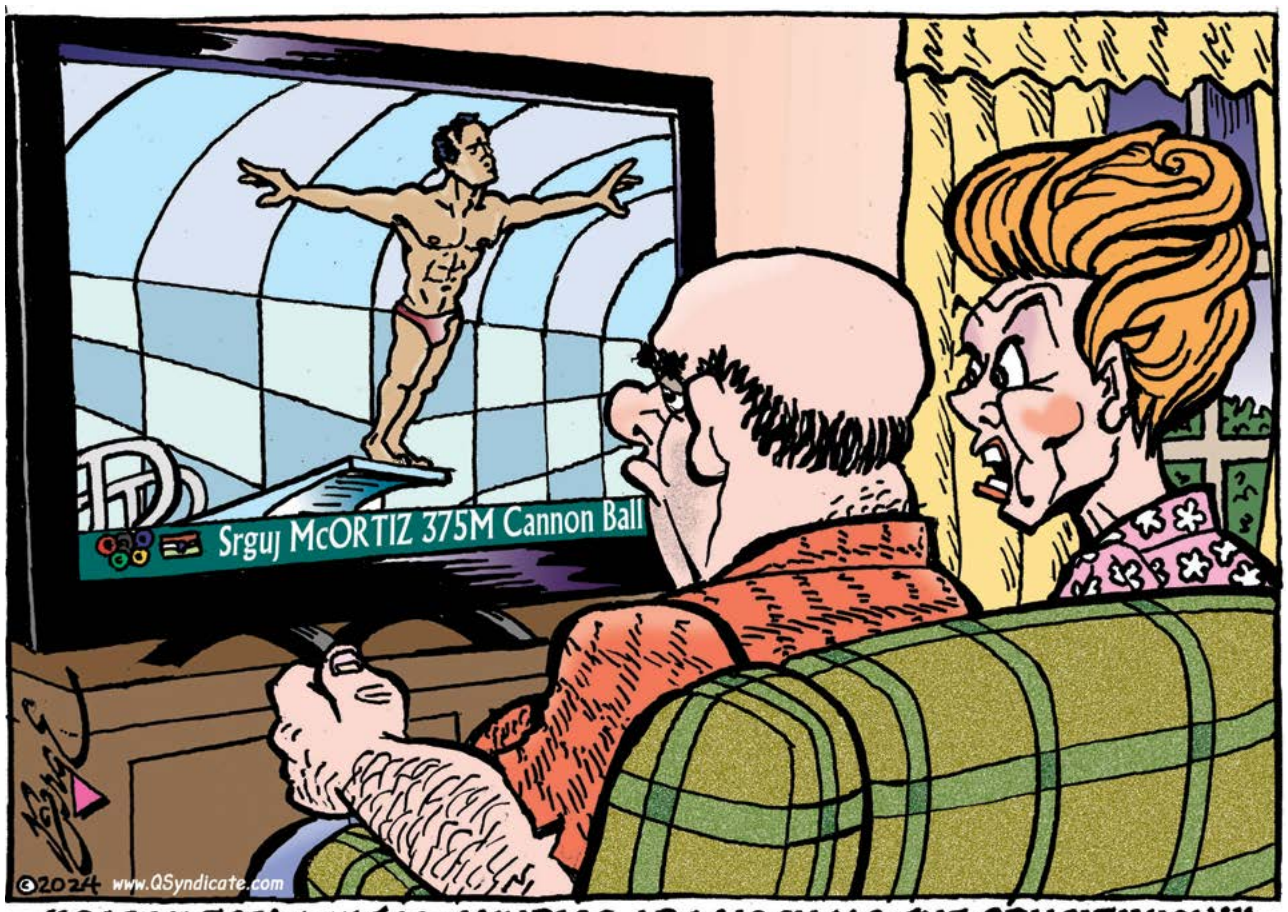
I know, absolutely shocking that there's a big overlap between transphobes and racists.

"For years, trans individuals have raised the alarm about the increasing impact of transphobia beyond trans bodies," she continues. "This goes beyond transphobic tweets and posts. The bills aimed at restricting trans bodies from accessing bathrooms and medical treatment are all in the supposed name of protecting cis women. Yet, cis women are increasingly vulnerable to these policies and attacks. And if they can seek to control trans bodies, they certainly won't stop there."

She is absolutely right. As author and leading trans activist Raquel Willis posted on X, "The anti-trans 'gender critical' crusade has…always been about pushing white supremacist, bioessentialist purity standards. All women who don't or can't conform to those ideas are in danger."

It's not hard to see the line between this and anti-choice legislation that seeks to ban abortion with no exceptions and then virtually imprisons any pregnant person seeking one by making it illegal for them to even leave the state.

As I said, I do not support punching people in the face, but I do advise that you punch anti-trans and anti-choice candidates as hard as you can at the ballot box.



"SACRILEGE! NOW THE OLYMPICS ARE MOCKING THE CRUCIFIXION!"

THE SCROLL

QUICK HITS & CAN'T MISSES

Meet Liam Clymer, BTL's New Staff Content Creator

Liam Clymer, a Michigan State University broadcast journalism student and freelance reporter, has joined the BTL staff in a brand new role: content creator. The role will allow BTL to expand its reach in new ways and to apply a greater focus to multimedia offerings.

"As staff content creator, my intention is to expand the reach of our queer stories by showcasing them in short-form content, and to produce original video and audio productions that will expose Pride Source/Between The Lines readers to a whole new form of LGBTQ+ news," Clymer says. "I hope to draw from what I've learned at MSU as a broadcast journalism student, where much of my work has boiled down to how to communicate effectively and accurately. I'll use this experience to not only give a space for queer community members to let their voices be heard, but I'll also work to ensure that their voices reach wide audiences."

When he's not studying or working, you might find Clymer hanging with his two dogs, Zelda and Trixie, or running an improv club connected to MSU'S Roial Players, where he also performs in other theatrical endeavors.

Welcome aboard, Liam!

Liam Clymer. Courtesy photo

MiGen at the 2024 Motor City Pride parade. Photo: Facebook

MiGen Board Names New Executive Committee

MiGen, Michigan's LGBTQ+ elders network, recently announced a new executive committee, including a new board chair. Current vice chair Roger Bushnell, who has served on the board for four years, will take over for Angela Lippard, who has been on the board since 2019. Lippard will join the organization's training and education team.

Bushnell, a senior advisor at CarePatrol Franchise Systems, has served on the Alzheimer's Association of Michigan's board. "MiGen is privileged to have a team of passionate employees and dedicated board members. I am fully confident in my ability to build on the outstanding work of my predecessor, Angela Lippard," Bushnell said in a statement. "The significant growth that MiGen has experienced demonstrates our unwavering dedication."

The new executive committee also includes Courtney Mucklin (vice chair), Royale Theus (secretary) and Dr. Richard Ginnettii (treasurer). David Hind, program manager for Alzheimer's Association of Michigan's HIV & LGBTQ+ supportive services, will come on as a new board member.

Sexy Summer Swimmers Get the Gold

A recent survey conducted by gay hookup site Squirt.org focuses on how gay and bi men feel about summer athletes, especially the Olympians competing in the 2024 Paris Summer Games. The survey's 3,000 gay and bisexual male respondents reported that swimmers, divers and beach volleyball players are the sexiest summer athletes. Swimmers, 24% of respondents said, are the hottest.

Openly gay British diver Tom Daley emerged as the most smashable summer athlete, although the response "all of them" was the most common answer. Swimmers Adam Peaty and Caeleb Dressel came in second and third, respectively. Seventy-five percent of participants admitted to getting turned on while watching summer sports, with over 70% specifically citing swimming and diving as the hottest sports to watch.

The 2024 Pride Source Candidate Survey Is Live

We love informed voters (and informing voters). That's why Pride Source Media, publishers of Between The Lines, welcomes input from any political campaign in Michigan to complete our presidential year candidate survey. Several key questions relate to LGBTQ+ issues in Michigan — we'll share results with readers in the coming weeks. Email sarah@pridesource.com for access.

Visit the DIA with MiGen

Here's your chance to make a new friend or two and enjoy one of Michigan's most treasured attractions. MiGen will host a visit to the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), including a guided tour for older LGBTQ+ adults on Aug. 21. In addition to exploring some of the museum's 65,000 works of art, the event is an opportunity to connect with other LGBTQ+ older adults in a warm, inclusive environment. Register at bit.ly/46APG8o.

Tegan and Sara Catfishing Doc Set for October

Fans of sapphic true crime, pay attention. An upcoming Hulu documentary has your number. "Fanatical: The Catfishing of Tegan and Sara" focuses on a scheme that targeted fans of the queer indie sibling musical duo for years. After Tegan Quin was hacked in 2011, her identity was stolen and used to trick fans into thinking they were speaking to the real Tegan — instead they were victims of a widespread scam that cost fans thousands of dollars. The doc will debut on Oct. 18.

Tegan and Sara. Photo: Facebook

The New Modern Family

Judy and Julianna's inspiring path through transition and parenthood

Judy (left) and Julianna Wilson with their daughters at their Plymouth home. Photo: Andrew Potter

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

It's a love story that starts as many do: in middle school, where sweethearts Judy and Julianna Wilson first met. It's also a love story that has dramatically evolved since those early days nearly three decades ago.

Much has changed for this set of parents, who are sitting in the dining room at the Plymouth home they once lived together in as a romantic couple. But they haven't for a while now, not since Julianna came out to Judy in 2021 as a transgender woman.

Could they make their relationship work still, even though Judy remains attracted to the opposite sex? Could they, once Julianna was finally comfortable enough to live as the woman she first saw herself being at age 4? The short answer is no. They are still married, but separated. Co-parents first now. Friends second.

Yet, like those love stories that make us believe in love despite the odds against us as LGBTQ+ people, this story evolves as we might hope all such stories do: with love still, in the end, enduring.

The long table they're sitting at on a recent evening is still something they share regularly since that table is built for a family, and that they are. On this particular weekday evening, they're preparing a simple all-American family dinner. Julianna grabs the air fryer as their girls play in the living room. Tonight it's quick and easy: a Trader Joe's frozen meal. Minutes before, Julianna was at the table, trying to choke out reflections of how hard it was to talk about her transition with their daughters, then 2 and 4 years old, and how it changed her relationship with Judy. She can't help but succumb to all the tears that start running, and don't let up so easily, as she reflects on one of the toughest days during their breakup: when, after moving out of this home, the girls visited her just after she'd furnished her new place.

"This is what I understand about myself," she recalls telling them, "that I have a boy's body, but I'm a girl and mom doesn't want to be married to a girl." Their oldest reacted tearfully, confused not by that, but by something else entirely: "But you are married," she said to Julianna.

"I broke her heart that day," Julianna says, in tears still.

"But the girls understood right away that dad is a girl," Judy adds. "They got that right away. It was the separation that was hard."

When Judy and Julianna first met as very different people in the 1990s, they were both students at West Middle School in Plymouth. Julianna was the new kid at the end of eighth grade. A Cedar Point trip — and a makeout session on the bus during that adventure — took them to new romantic heights. Throughout high school, they broke up and got back together and then stayed together through college, while Judy attended Western and Julianna went to University of Michigan. Then they had two girls, who they raised through an historically challenging time — those pandemic years characterized by immense stress and upheaval — even beyond Judy's postpartum depression and Julianna coming out as a trans woman.

"I've heard it described that dysphoria is a boulder that you carry with you until you reach a point and you can't go forward anymore," Julianna says. "The pandemic has to be important in terms of that being a reflective time and the prolonged, unmitigated stress that sits on top of all the depression and anxiety that I was experiencing."

Even as a kid who grew up in the '80s, Julianna carried around that weight, suppressing her feelings of gender dysphoria because, partly, "there was no name for them when I was 4."

In the fall of 2021, amid a wave of anti-trans legislation sweeping the nation, Julianna was ready to be who she felt she couldn't be as a kid, or even decades later, when she married Judy and they began raising a family together. Like many cis straight parents born in the 20th century, she followed the societal roadmap to a bygone version of the American dream, and then dismantled it completely.

"I kept saying to myself, 'I don't want to be a suburban dad guy,'" she recalls. "'I can't be this dad guy.'"

Around that time, a friend casually mentioned during a conversation they were having

See **The New Modern Family**, page 16

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This Queer Midwife Is Hoping to Make It Easier on LGBTQ+ Parents with 'PregnantTogether' Community

Founder Marea Goodman offers support for family-building and beyond

BY DANA RUDOLPH

Queer parents and prospective parents can sometimes have a hard time finding support and community. Marea Goodman, a licensed midwife and queer parent, is hoping to make that easier with PregnantTogether, a growing virtual community for queer and solo parents and parents-to-be.

"I really wanted to create a space that centered the queer experience of getting pregnant, being pregnant, giving birth and raising kids, and to have some way to bring tons of people together who otherwise would feel isolated in their communities," they said in an interview.

"Primarily we have solo parents, queer couples and trans men, but it's open to everybody," they said. "It's definitely growing as the need grows and according to the folks that show up."

Goodman themself has three children, now 3, 6, and 14 years old. Their now-ex had a 7-year-old child and was getting pregnant as a solo parent by choice when she and Goodman started their relationship. Goodman then bore the couple's third child. "Now we are separated and figuring out co-parenting," Goodman said. "I've had a lot of different family building experiences, as a nongestational parent, now as a solo parent and as a gestational parent. Those are all the communities that I work with and support in PregnantTogether."

Goodman obtained their midwifery license from the California Medical Board in 2015 and founded Restore Midwifery in 2016 in the Bay Area. In 2020, when they were pregnant themself, they began writing the book "Baby Making for Everybody: Family Building and Fertility for LGBTQ+ and Solo Parents" (Balance/Hachette) with fellow queer midwife Ray Rachlin. They were both motivated by their own family building journeys, Goodman explained. "I felt deeply unprepared, even though I had been working with queer families getting pregnant for four years at that point, and attending births for 10 years. It was so different when it was all happening in my own body."

Marea Goodman. Photo: Sand and Stone Media

The book incorporated "testimonials from people who have a diverse range of experiences," Goodman said, and "it really opened my eyes to the power of community and connection." PregnantTogether (pregnanttogether.com) grew from a belief in that power and the idea of a space "where there are hundreds of other people who are going through the same things that you're going through." It now has about 200 members, mostly from the U.S., plus some from Canada and as far afield as Belgium and Slovakia.

PregnantTogether includes chat rooms and monthly virtual groups as well as monthly talks from experts on queer or solo-parent family formation, covering topics like "choosing a sperm donor, tracking your fertility, navigating known-donor relationships, and solo-parent family formation," Goodman said. "We've had queer family lawyers talk about protecting your family; IVF doctors; and we just had a really beautiful workshop about tending grief through trying to conceive, pregnancy and postpartum." The talks are recorded and kept on the site as resources, along with fact sheets and more.

"I'm not actively growing my family anymore," they added, "but I just started a parenting section of the community, too, for as our kids grow. So we have a monthly queer parenting support group."

"Membership is $20 a month or $200 a year," they said, noting that people can pay with a Health Savings Account (HSA) or Flexible Spending Account (FSA). If one member of a couple registers, Goodman offers a free link for the other to have their own account. And for those who find this is still out of their budget, they said, "I'll give discounts. I want folks to come."

One frequent question in the community, Goodman said, is "Where do we start?" They will then point people to "tools for how to choose a donor and how to figure out which insemination method makes sense for them." Another common question is "when to switch to a higher level of fertility care," an expensive process that can be "really stressful." PregnantTogether therefore offers a trying-to-conceive support group, which attracts 20 to 30 people every month.

The current political climate, too, has meant questions and hurdles for queer family building. One member couple in Texas "are going to Seattle to do reciprocal in vitro fertilization (RIVF) because they don't want to have embryos in Texas," Goodman shared. Not everyone has that option, they said, but asserted, "Queer folks have always found ways to be creative about growing our families and we're really freaking resilient."

For those facing obstacles, Goodman assures them, "You're not alone," adding, "There are lots of other people doing this, who have figured out creative solutions to building the families that they want to have. Tapping into those wider networks emotionally and logistically is really important, especially during this time when the political landscape is threatening many aspects of how we grow our families."

Despite the challenges, Goodman said, simply deciding to grow your family means that you are "practicing so many of the skills of parenting, like patience, being open to change, and personal growth. There's so much love that we bring even before a child exists in our bodies or in the world." They urge people to see family building "as part of this longer journey," and to realize that "You're learning what you need to learn to be the parent that you want to be. It's the most beautiful and humbling and growthful experience I think that a human can have."

If you'd like to try out PregnantTogether, e-mail marea@pregnanttogether.com for a free month of membership.

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Continued from page 12

Julianna, Judy and their daughters. Photo: Andrew Potter

that the topic wasn't something that would resonate with Julianna because she just wouldn't get it, the friend said, "as a cis straight person." "My brain was like, wait a second," Julianna remembers thinking. "That's not how I describe myself."

At that time, childhood memories and past thoughts that put her into a depressed state rushed into Julianna's mind. Finally, a counseling session in spring 2022 helped her see more clearly that she was transgender.

"I told Judy and she had a very negative reaction," she recalls. "She had a very, very negative reaction."

This reveal, which was news to Judy, came at a time when Judy was struggling with one child who wouldn't sleep through the night and another in the early stages of potty training. "I was sliding head first into postpartum depression," she recalls. "We really weren't in a place to support each other. We really weren't. Some of the circumstances for postpartum depression are moms who don't feel supported."

It became clear that Judy's feelings were mirroring what Julianna was experiencing: "They say the biggest challenge for people who come out as transgender is not having the people who love them support them."

Still, they lived together for a challenging nine months, trying to figure out what was next for their relationship and their family. "We were fighting a lot," Judy says. "We were just bickering and that would lead to small things that would just explode into bigger fights."

"I think it was really hard for me," Judy says. "I mean, I misgendered Julianna for those nine months. It was because it felt like the end of my marriage."

"I had a lot of grief," she continues. "Which I know is common, but… I don't know. I hate to go too much into my feelings because I know that there's gonna be trans people that read this article, and I don't want to be triggering for people."

Julianna, who says that "it's difficult for someone that is going through a gender crisis to be put on the stand," which she says was her experience, puts it plainly when asked how the last few years have been for her as she has transitioned and come to terms with the end of her romantic relationship with Judy.

"Is it because we lose our partners? That's what happens," she says. "You just roll the dice. And if you're in a straight-facing relationship, and you transition, what're the odds of that [other] person being straight? Nine out of 10, at least. So, it's not inconceivable that north of 90% of people who transition lose their partners. This is part of our lived reality. And if there's people who are going through this now — and everybody's story's different — it's my belief that this is the road that you're gonna have to walk. You're gonna have to walk down the road with a partner that doesn't understand you. You're gonna have to lose that partner and find your way on your own. I just believe that that's true."

"This is a hard existence," she adds, bluntly. "There's a ton of joy in it, but it's not easy."

What's especially hard is when the anxiety kicks in; sometimes it happens just going to the bathroom with the kids at a public restaurant. "I worry," she admits. "If Judy's not there and it's just me and the kids, it's like, is someone going to perceive me as a threat and do something about it? And what if they do and I can't protect my girls?"

At the same time, joy also keeps finding its way into Julianna's life — in all of their lives, actually — in new and unexpected ways. And actually, sometimes *because* of the transition. Both Judy and Julianna get a kick out of sharing how their oldest daughter, who is now 5 and Julianna's "biggest cheerleader," charges Julianna's mom a dollar when she messes up her name or gender pronouns. (Julianna is quick to note that her mother is "very supportive," even if sometimes she gets the pronouns mixed up.)

Two months after Julianna came out to the kids, Judy took them to the Plymouth Library, pulled "The Pronoun Book" from the kids' section and read it to them right then and there.

> *"Everyone changes. This is my best friend who I've traveled the world with. We used to spend 23 hours a day for years on end, literally without exaggeration. There's not a romantic future there. Not the one that we thought that we had. But it doesn't mean there's not a future there…"*
>
> — Julianna Wilson

And then there are the sidewalk sales. Judy notes a recent one as an aside, and Julianna excitedly peps up at just the mention. It's not just the idea of shopping for clothing near their homes in downtown Plymouth — the sidewalk sales have become a gesture of love and support.

It began last summer after Julianna had moved out. At the time, Judy began going to downtown stores to do what she calls a "vibe check." She made a point of stopping into women's clothing boutiques to gauge their experience with trans customers.

Where they both live in Plymouth now, just five minutes from each other, may not seem like a place where those kinds of queries would be met with positive affirmations, but mostly they have been. Even if that wasn't the case, Judy and Julianna aren't going anywhere. Plymouth, where a big Pride flag hangs right in front of Judy's house, is home.

"If this were a movie and this were taking place in the '60s, then, you know, the father figure would take off for San Francisco right away," Judy says.

In this home, family always comes first,

Julianna, Judy and their daughters at Judy's dining room table. Photo: Andrew Potter

and the deep, lasting bond between Judy and Julianna is evident in everything they do. You can see their love in the little things — like the sidewalk sales they visit together, the air-fryer dinners and the way they both laugh when Judy jokingly says, "I'm trying to get Julianna to become a Girl Scout leader because I don't want to do it." And the heartfelt moments are clear when Julianna looks at Judy and says, "This is a person that I love forever."

"Even when Julianna was still in a questioning mode, what I would say is, 'Don't worry about us.' What the kids need are two happy, healthy parents. And that is the most important thing. And that's something we still hold to," Judy says.

"We're family. We are *our* family. We still have a relationship. I love Julianna. I don't just love Julianna — I genuinely like her. I like spending time with her. I like the four of us. But that love has changed. It has a different texture. But it is just as strong as it ever was."

This version of family is defined by their own rules, on their own terms. Or, as Julianna says, "We're not gonna have a queer marriage, but we sure as shit are gonna have a queer divorce."

"Everyone changes," she adds. "This is my best friend who I've traveled the world with. We used to spend 23 hours a day for years on end, literally without exaggeration. There's not a romantic future there. Not the one that we thought that we had. But it doesn't mean there's not a future there, and possibly, dare I say, a better future because it's a more complete and a more honest thing than what we had before."

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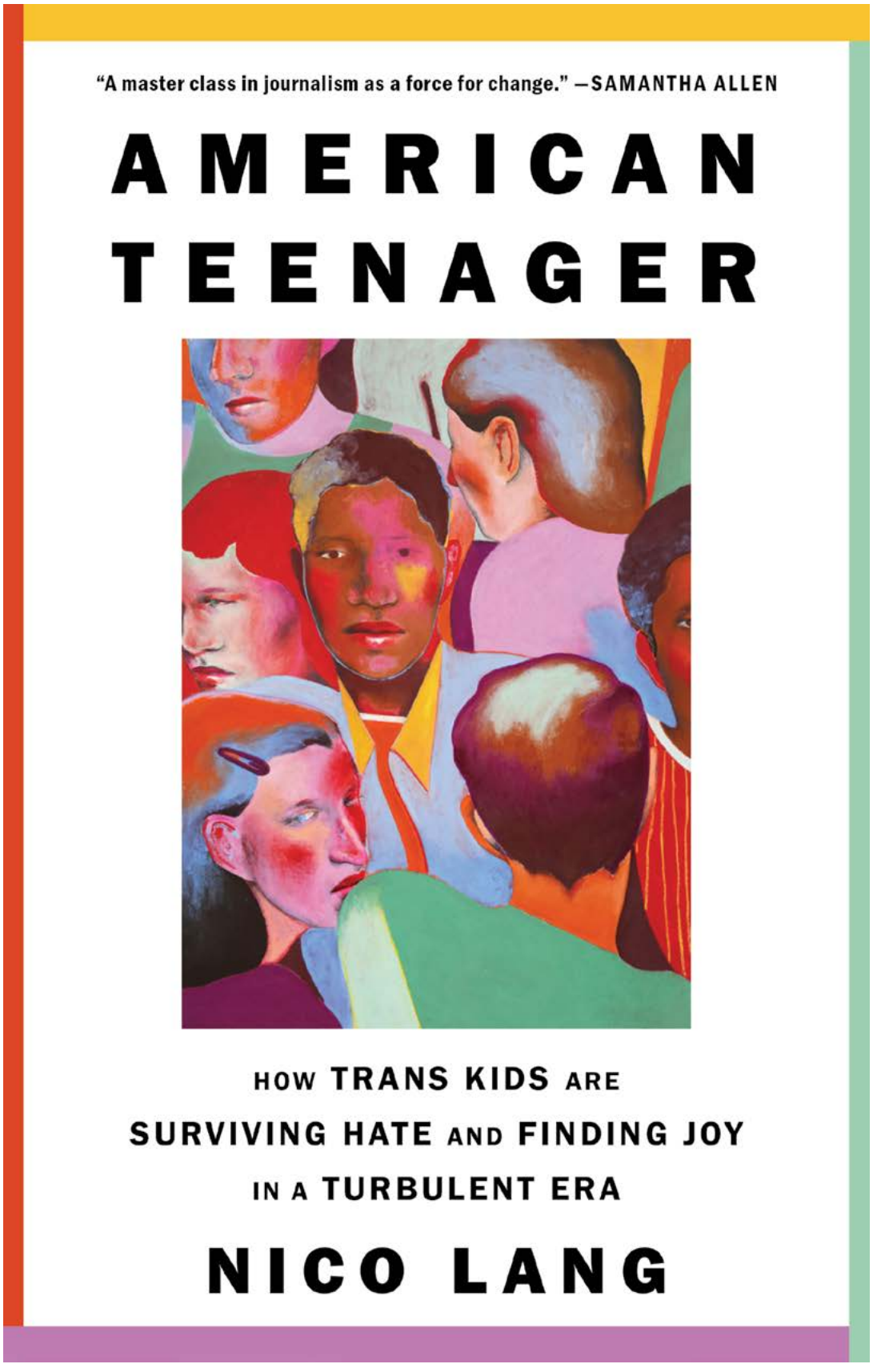
Journalist Nico Lang Wields the Power of Storytelling with 'American Teenager'

Book highlights eight trans teens living in a hostile political era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AMERICAN TEENAGER
HOW TRANS KIDS ARE SURVIVING HATE AND FINDING JOY IN A TURBULENT ERA
NICO LANG

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Los Angeles-based writer and Ohio native Nico Lang is fiercely protective of the families he portrays in his upcoming book "American Teenager," and for good reason. As of the beginning of August, 624 bills have been proposed across 43 states that target transgender minors and their families, from bathroom restrictions to cutting patients off from gender-affirming hormone treatments. Among bills that have passed in recent years are new laws in Florida and Texas that hold parents criminally liable for seeking gender-affirming care for their children. It's a troubling and sometimes frightening time to be a trans kid, or the parent of one, in America.

Lang, an award-winning journalist who has been reporting on the LGBTQ+ community for over a decade for publications like The New York Times, NPR, Queerty, them.us and many others, tells BTL that doing right by the eight teens and families he interviewed was the priority for the multi-year project. He's seen what happens when journalists misrepresent the kind of stories they have to tell — how it can put a child's safety at risk when the internet does its thing. But he also feels strongly in the power of those stories to be agents for change.

The eight essays Lang wrote for "American Teenager" are the product of weeks spent with each of his subjects. They represent transgender, nonbinary and genderfluid kids from across the country, including deep red states like South Dakota, Texas and Florida and progressive communities in Illinois and California. Each story is unique, Lang says, just as every transgender person is unique. "They aren't all activists; they aren't all trans in the same ways," he explains. "At heart of it, they are just kids."

This message is central to why Lang poured so much energy and thought into the project, and an almost equal amount of time editing the final product, a process that has taken months and involved dozens of editors, reviewers and sensitivity readers. "I know that might feel like a counterintuitive process for most authors, but for me, it felt really important that there wouldn't be anything in this that would create a controversy that would take away from the message," he says.

During a recent interview, Lang shared insights into his lengthy writing process and how his teenage subjects — Wyatt, Rhydian, Mykah, Clint, Ruby, Augie, Jack and Kylie — surprised him. "American Teenager" is set to publish on Oct. 8.

Why did you decide to write a book focused on transgender youth?

Partly because I knew I could, and I knew that nobody else would have the kind of access that I do. This access was built on years of trust with families in the trans community. Many families have gone underground and they won't do any media anymore just because they've been burned by journalists too many times. So I had a unique opportunity to get it right and tell a story few other people could tell because of the trust I've built in this community.

And I really wanted to give these kids a platform because their voices are often silenced or ignored. I knew that I had a responsibility to give kids back that platform because they really needed it. I really want to reconnect people to hope because I know I need it. I need hope right now, so I can imagine other people do, too.

What surprised you about your subjects?

It reminded me that we sometimes treat young trans people like these activists who are knowledgeable and wise — I think people talk about them sometimes as if they're saints or something. But hanging out with these kids for weeks at a time reminded me that they're just kids.

Trans kids aren't different than any

See **American Teenager**, page 26

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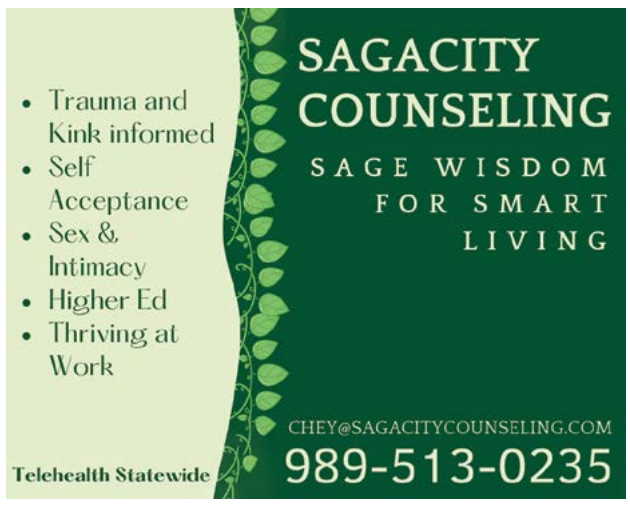
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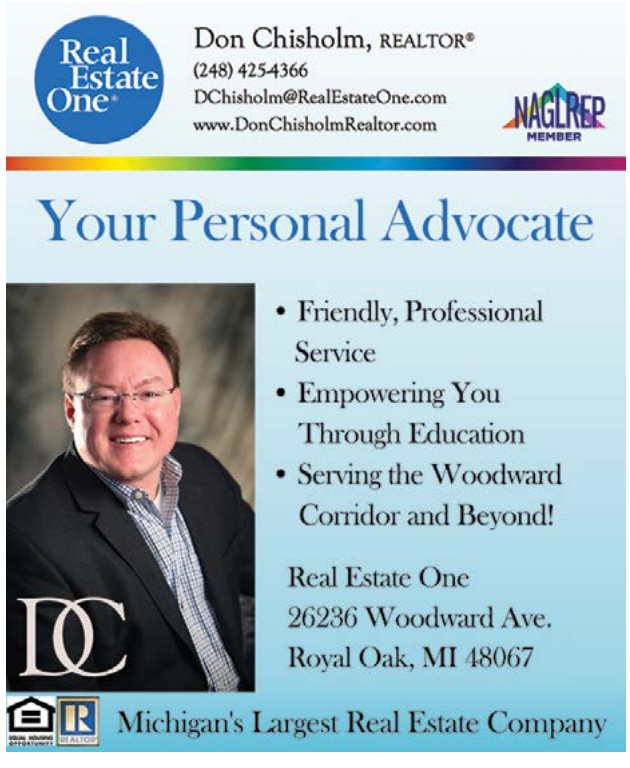
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Continued from page 7

received the access to these vital resources.

"I know a lot of trans women, and I see a lot of workshops directed toward them — makeup, hair, feminization and other things like that," he said. "I never was seeing a workshop for what I'm doing here for transmasculine men."

Davis invited stylists from queer-supportive salons, including V Cuts Detroit in Hazel Park, to discuss beard and hair grooming tips while Davis fielded skincare questions — he even took the floor as a model for a beard-trimming demonstration.

Attendee Julian Apfelblat said the event was more about being around fellow transmasculine individuals than any workshop tips. "I get a lot out of spending time with everybody," Apfelblat said. "It helps one feel less isolated. I'm only nine months into my transition, but to find places that have people you can really relate to is very helpful."

The event was more of an open house rather than a stilted presentation, with attendees asking questions at will and laughing over shared experiences.

"This is specifically for transmasculine people and I think that there's something even more comforting with having this extremely specific group," Weathers said. "I think we all have a lot of similar experiences and questions that we might only want to ask in a group dynamic of people like this."

(Above) Attendee Luckey Weathers. (Left) V from V Cuts gives Derek Davis a trim. Photos: Andrew Potter

Davis said it's necessary to consider whose voices are being heard. "It's important for trans people to speak on the trans experience because cisgender people cannot speak on our experience and they shouldn't be speaking on our experience," Davis said.

He added that, in his eyes, a good trans ally should instead be listening and showing active support. "When someone starts their journey — changing pronouns, changing your name — that's hard for everyone. It's not just hard for a trans person, it's hard for everyone," Davis said. "It's how you handle that change that makes you an ally or not. If you are actively learning and actively making the effort to respect people's pronouns, respect their names and their journey, then that is active support."

Stand with Trans partnered with many different businesses and organizations to physically show their support. Binders, haircare products, rolls of TransTape and packing underwear were all given away to attendees through a raffle. Not one attendee left empty-handed or without a smile.

As the event began to wind down for the day, Davis said he hoped more events like this one would occur in the future. "I hope to continue doing events like this to really make sure that everyone's journey can be as easy as possible, " Davis said. "We know the world is not a nice place, and if I can help at all to make someone's journey easier, I would absolutely love to do that."

We'll Miss You, Richard

Puzzle can be found on page 29

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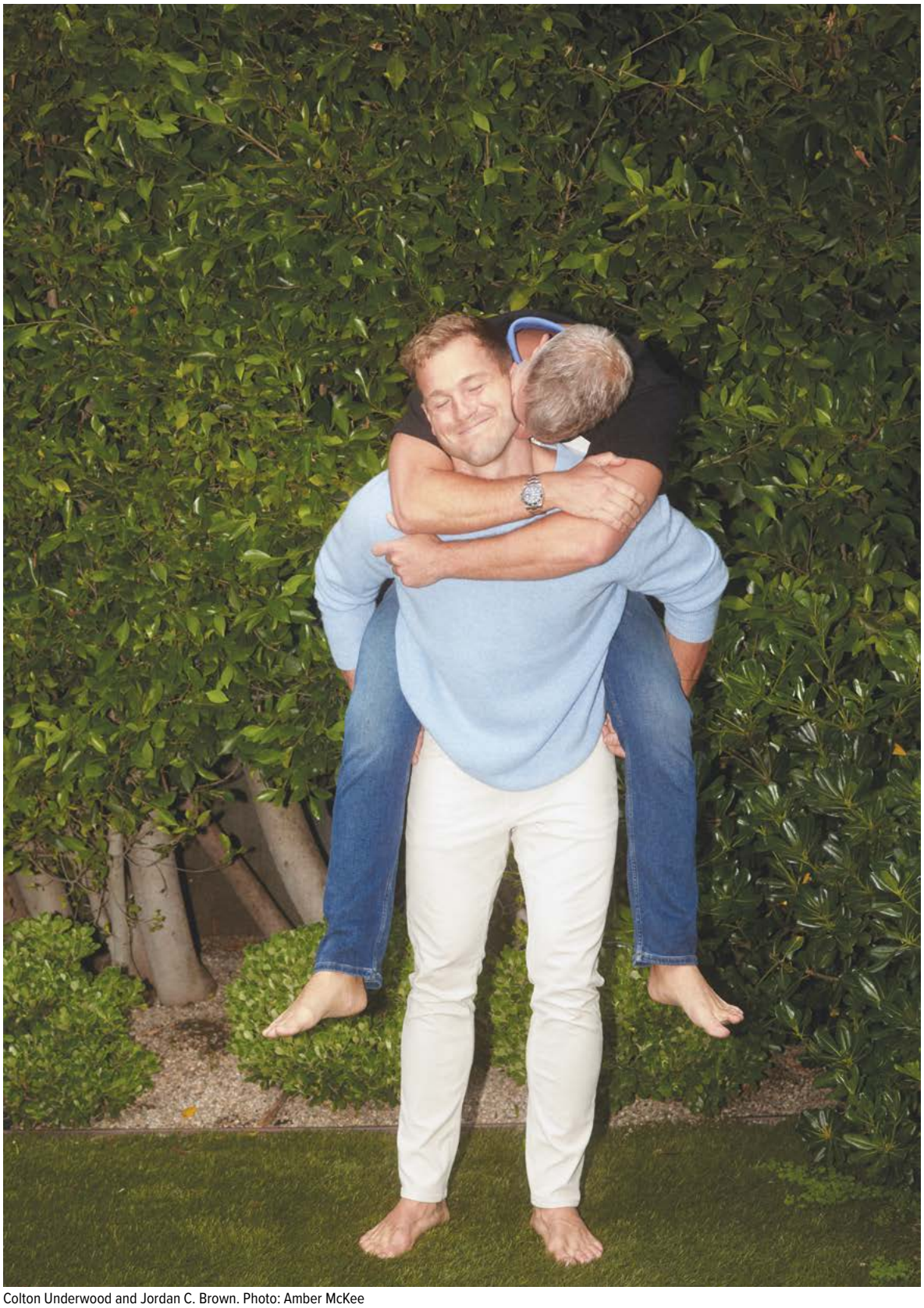

Colton Underwood and Jordan C. Brown. Photo: Amber McKee

The former 'Bachelor' star on showing conservatives that he deserves to have a family too

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

You knew him first as the first gay "Bachelor." Many years later, in 2021, you got to know him much better when "Coming Out Colton" aired on Netflix. And while you don't know Colton Underwood as a daddy yet, you will come October.

By mid October, Underwood and his husband Jordan C. Brown, who he married in May 2023, will welcome a newborn baby boy. To prepare for parenthood, Underwood has already done his homework by producing 28 episodes of his podcast, "Daddyhood." On the podcast, the 32-year-old former football player, who followed in his own father's footsteps by playing college football at Illinois State University, opens up about the couple's fertility journey and talks to guests ranging from surrogates to egg donors and other expecting parents.

On a recent Zoom call, Underwood sported a tan and blonder hair — a combination of highlights and natural lightening thanks to a recent trip to Costa Rica. He spoke about helping to inform his conservative followers about same-sex parenting, navigating his family's privacy as a public figure and one of the biggest misconceptions about being a gay dad.

Your whole trajectory is fascinating. I'm not sure even you expected at this point in your life that you'd be welcoming a child in October and hosting a podcast called "Daddyhood."

Yeah, I know. That's the best though. Life throws you curveballs, and I'm so proud of Jordan and I just staying true to who we are and what we want out of a relationship. And also, it's been a long journey for us, two years in the making. And I know for a lot of people sometimes it takes much longer too. But I'm so blessed and so looking forward to bringing the baby boy home.

What stage are you in right now emotionally? And also, what preparation stage are you in knowing you're just a couple of months away from having a child?

I mean, we're both just so excited and feeling really grateful. As far as preparation goes, we have the luxury of not physically having to carry the baby, so we're a little ahead of the game. Our nursery is already done. We have most of the essentials already chosen and picked out, so we're feeling really good, feeling really prepared, and just ready to give this baby so much love.

Have you decided on a name for the baby?

It hasn't officially been locked in. We have a few that we're headed to the hospital with just to see what he looks like the most.

Some parents are so definitively set on the name of the baby before

the child is born. What made you go this route?

Well, look, we've heard it all at this point. Whether people intend to or not, a lot of people are pretty pushy of, "We did this, and it worked great. You should do this." But Jordan and I have always done a good job of taking a step back and following our path and making decisions that we feel are going to be best for our family. Who knows if we might land on a name in the next week or two or tomorrow even, but right now we have a handful of names that we're going to be walking into the hospital with.

Are some of the people who have been influential in this journey for you on your podcast?

Yeah. Season One was all about fertility, and I have my fertility doctors and fertility lawyers on there. We have surrogates and egg donors on the podcast, not mine, by any means. But just really trying to paint the picture of the overall process and how much goes into it.

I think just my goal for "Daddyhood" is to humanize this experience of bringing life into this world and to show that not just the traditional type of relationships and people are allowed to have families. Everybody can, whether you're a single dad, a single mom, two moms, two dads, whatever your family dynamic looks like, as long as that baby and the kid is loved. That's my goal here.

In addition to celebratory comments on your socials, there's also a fair share of negative comments relating to you raising a child in a same-sex relationship. Considering you do have a more conservative fan base than the majority of LGBTQ+ public figures in the world, just based purely on your football history, how do you think you are a bridge between those followers and who you are and what you stand for?

I take a lot of pride in it. I mean, I realized that they still follow me and they're listening to me. And that's more than a lot of other queer people can say because things tend to get heated pretty quickly, especially when it comes to people projecting their opinions and thoughts on your rights as a human being. I feel like I hold a responsibility not only for myself, but for our community, to be patient with them and to listen to them, but also to educate them.

I definitely want to be a voice that is standing my ground and saying like, "Hey, this is who I am. This is what my experience has been like, and here's what other people's experiences have been like as well." And just somewhat trying to take the high road, but also just using this as an opportunity to bridge people who might not have listened to one another in the past.

I want to show them who I am and why I'm deserving and why I've always wanted to be a dad, and what also kept me in the closet for as long as it did. Not that I need to prove this to people, but I also just feel like it is my responsibility to continue to right the wrongs of these people and their opinions and prove them wrong.

Why did you always want to be a dad?

I just have always wanted a family, and I've always wanted to raise kids. I just feel like it's the ultimate bond that I can share now with my husband Jordan, and also just a lifelong goal of mine. I know people have financial goals and career goals. I've always, from my young days, wanted to be a stay-at-home dad, and I wanted to bond with my kid and I wanted to teach him or her how to play softball or baseball or soccer or football and be a coach and a mentor. I just feel like I have so much to give to my family and to have that happen this year is incredibly exciting.

What inspired "Daddyhood"?

I think the inspiration for "Daddyhood" was brought just from the limited information that's out there for same-sex couples trying to have families. I mean, it's expensive. It's long, it's confusing. There's a lot of paperwork that goes into it. I figured I have this opportunity to bring people along, and that's sort of what I've done my entire career and my entire life is bring people along this journey with me. And "Daddyhood" is no different. They're there for me from the moment I tested my sperm to see how many sperm I had, to doing the mock cycles and the egg transfers and the news that we're pregnant, and then bringing this baby boy into the world.

> *"I think just my goal for 'Daddyhood' is to humanize this experience of bringing life into this world and to show that not just the traditional type of relationships and people are allowed to have families. Everybody can, whether you're a single dad, a single mom, two moms, two dads, whatever your family dynamic looks like, as long as that baby and the kid is loved."*

Which guests left a major impression on you?

There's so many. What I love doing is elevating the voices of people and companies that are innovating the space and investing not only their time and resources and money into it, but really just dedicating themselves to making it easier for the queer community. One that I could single out quickly would be Legacy Sperm. They're an at-home sperm testing kit, which I think is huge not only for same-sex couples that are living in maybe more conservative states, but also our trans community. They have a lot of trans customers just because of what I pointed out. Those people might not feel comfortable going into a doctor's office or a traditional lab to get their work done out of fear of many different things.

In one episode, you discuss how surprising it may be to people who watched you on "The Bachelor" that you may decide to keep your family life more private. Why does that approach seem best for your family?

I think it's my partner. I mean, Jordan is an incredible balance for me. He's not a very public person and likes to be private. But he also understands and supports me in my career and what I'm doing. He also feels the responsibility of us continuing just to be somewhat public-facing as two married men. And I think that went into our decision to continue to be out and open and not hide anything. But also there's criticism always that comes along with that. I've done it all: I've let people's comments go, I've addressed them, I've taken the "kill them with kindness" approach. I've tried it all, right? And it adds up.

To bring a baby into this world and then subject them to any type of opinions or hurt is something I want to avoid. So that's our golden rule right now: just to protect our family.

And yet you are in this distinct position, like we discussed, of how your public life can help change and shape the discourse around LGBTQ+ families. That's trickier to do if you're private about it. So how do you reconcile the two?

I mean, I'm going to just continue to do the work that I'm doing right now. I definitely think that I'm very much of the mindset of "people can be multiple things." And also people can change and people can grow. I'm certainly not the same person I was when I was 25, first entering the reality world. And I'm allowed to redraw my boundaries. I think I never really fully understood that, where I was like, "Oh, I came in through reality TV. I owe this to people." And it's like I can reevaluate and make decisions that are healthy and best for me as I continue to navigate my life. The same thing can be said about my relationship and my family and continuing to honor and respect the work that I want to do, but also do it in a way that feels good to me.

What are some of the common challenges that specifically gay fathers face?

For gay fathers, specifically, the thing that I hear is, "How dare you take this baby from a mother? The child needs a mother." Of course, biologically, I don't have the body parts of a woman, but I am going to hopefully have that emotional capability to connect with my son. [I want to] continue to break down the barriers and stereotypes that family is a man and a woman, and that's what the unit looks like. It can look like so many different things.

See **Colton Underwood**, page 28

Muna and the Power of Queer Representation: On the Scene at Pitchfork Music Festival

In Chicago last month, festivalgoers found 'moments of joy' and queer kinship in the music

BY JORDYN BRADLEY

I saw the indie pop band Muna perform live for the first time on my 22nd birthday. I had been a fan for years, and they were opening for Phoebe Bridgers at The Aretha Franklin Amphitheatre in Detroit. Their collaboration "Silk Chiffon" — which Rolling Stone called "bright," "buoyant," and "very gay" — had just come out the week prior, and at the time, I simply found it to be a catchy earworm (still true).

Since then, I've seen them four more times: most recently, at Chicago's Pitchfork Music Festival in late July. And while the chemistry of friends and bandmates Katie Gavin, Josette Maskin and Naomi McPherson is apparent onstage, so is the constant message through their songwriting that having situationships, relationships and friendships can be fun, sticky, confusing, embarrassing and enlightening all at the same time — but that's life.

Muna's music symbolizes the full package of being a queer person, and more personally, it plays as the soundtrack to my coming-of-age as a queer person.

When I saw them for the first time, the hypothetical love interest in question in all the songs was just Some Person to me. I identified as straight and knew their songs were about queer relationships, so I sang along and related in the ways that I could: with the trickiness of love and finding yourself. The next time I saw them live, I was at a place where I was open to putting a different label (or no label at all) on how I identified. The time after that, I saw them with some friends — and my girlfriend. I sobbed along to songs that helped me process the feelings associated with coming to terms with my identity and coming out. I was surrounded by other people who had also navigated who they were or who they were attracted to, just like the band performing on the stage in front of us had.

Muna performs at the 2024 Pitchfork Music Festival in Chicago. Photo: Jordyn Bradley

Abby Addleman is one of those people. Addleman and I met in the crowd before Muna's Pitchfork set and she told me how their songs "Silk Chiffon" and "It's Gonna Be Okay, Baby" helped her come to terms with her sexuality, and in a way, even helped her come out.

"Before I told my one friend, I kept replaying 'It's Gonna Be Okay, Baby' to remind myself that it was," Addleman said.

As queer people, we're taught that community is everything. Attending shows and festivals and being able to dance, sing, laugh, cry and shout together is one of the most formative experiences a person can have, and having them with people that make you feel safe, represented and understood is what I treasure most about live performances. Queer representation in pop culture is crucial for fans to know we aren't alone in our experiences, or for wanting to have songs and artists we can relate to.

> *"That's how I knew I was queer — I heard about it for the first time in these songs."*
>
> — Abby Addleman, Pitchfork attendee

While introducing the song "I Know A Place" during their set, Gavin, Muna's lead singer, shared that though it was one of the first the band wrote together, it has continued to carry weight and resonate with them and their fans.

"We wrote it just imagining we'd have a space where we'd feel safe," Gavin said.

This summer, outspoken queer artists are cementing their place in the music industry — and elsewhere — by taking over the festival circuit. Of course, gay musicians have always been here, and have performed at festivals before now, but something about this summer's lineups feels different. With Chappell Roan blowing up on the scene after opening for Olivia Rodrigo during her Guts Tour, the emerging artist's fanbase required Bonnaroo organizers to move her performance to a larger stage. Other queer artists, like Tyler, the Creator, Renee Rapp, Janelle Monáe, Brittany Howard, Conan Gray, Julien Baker, Victoria Monét, Ethel Cain and, of course, Muna are also big names on festival lineups this year.

"A lot of these queer artists wouldn't have a space in these festivals if it weren't for the queer fans and the stories being written about them, though," says Carter Jones, a Pitchfork attendee from Idaho.

See **Pitchfork**, page 30

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Nico Lang. Courtesy photo

‹ American Teenager
Continued from page 18

other kinds of kids. They're dealing with a lot of the same stuff and they're dealing with it in a similar way to lots of different teenagers. It's just we sometimes treat them as if it's so different. But if I were also dealing with anti-trans legislation on top of that, I don't know how I would have done it. I don't know how I would be a 16-year-old kid dealing with feelings about boys and then also trying to take on Republican lawmakers at the same time.

How did you approach the writing and editing process?

The writing was intense, but the editing has been even more so. It's been a community-editing process involving 30 or 40 people who saw early drafts of it and gave us feedback, sensitivity readers, my friends and other editors. I wanted it to feel as representative of the community as possible. For the most part, unless it was something I was really feeling strongly about or I just flatly thought that they were wrong, I deferred to the community of editors and readers.

Each family had to kind of sign off on their chapters. I didn't want to represent people in a way that didn't feel affirming. I was editing this book until they told me I couldn't anymore.

Why did you choose to release the book in October?

A nice bit of timing is that October is LGBTQ History Month, and it is so close to the election. While not being overtly about the election — I tried not to talk too much about presidential politics — I do feel like it's so inextricably tied to the election because the rights of these kids are on the ballot.

If this book moves you on and you feel like you fall in love with these kids and their experiences resonate with you, remember that, because you have a job to do a month later. The book is our little "October surprise." I wanted to go as deep as possible. I wanted them to feel really real to people — these subjects might feel like the reader's friend or maybe their own son. If somebody's your friend or your own son, you want to protect them. You want to do whatever it is to make sure that their rights aren't taken away and that they're not treated badly by politicians. If people really care about these kids and they care about what happens to them, they need to vote in accordance with that.

What impact do you hope this book will have on readers?

I want this to be a celebration for the trans community. I hope it inspires people and that it gives them hope again because I think that we all really need hope right now. When Obama ran in 2008, he ran on that message of hope and that just feels so distant now. It feels like a million years away since anyone was really talking about hope, and I think I just want to remind people that it's still there and we can just find it in each other.

I hope that people look at this book and they say, "I did need this" and it makes some sort of difference to them. I hope they're touched by it or moved by it or it does make a difference in people's lives.

It's meant to be beautiful and celebratory and affirming. These kids have so much in their lives that is negative and isn't joyful and which really dims their light — this book should be the opposite of that. I hope the community feels like this is a credit to them and a celebration of them.

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‹ Colton Underwood
Continued from page 23

Any famous gay dads who have been mentors to you during this?

Obviously you look at the examples of Andy Cohen, Anderson Cooper, Neil Patrick Harris. Those are men who put a lot of work in and didn't always have to be as public as they were, but they were because they knew that there was work to be done.

Are there any current parenting trends or practices you're following that you find interesting?

I've obviously read articles and books and all of that, but I feel like it all goes out the window. As soon as you bring that baby home, you really have to bond and figure out what they want. Jordan is definitely more of the products person — products, ingredients — and he's very picky on organic everything, and I love that. He and I are very yin and yang with what we bring to the table as parents.

Colton Underwood and Jordan C. Brown. Photo: Amber McKee

What are your future plans for "Daddyhood"?

Season Two is going to be a lot more of just me continuing to talk about my experiences, but also bringing on other dads and incredible brands that are innovating and continuing to push for equality in many different ways. That's the big thing: continuing to serve as a bridge to many different communities and do my part.

When can listeners expect to tune into those upcoming episodes?

I will say after I get my head above water after bringing my baby boy into this world, that's when it will go back into production. I want to continue to get that experience so then I can share authentic stories and really open up and be vulnerable about how it's been impacting me. So I would definitely say later this year or early next year.

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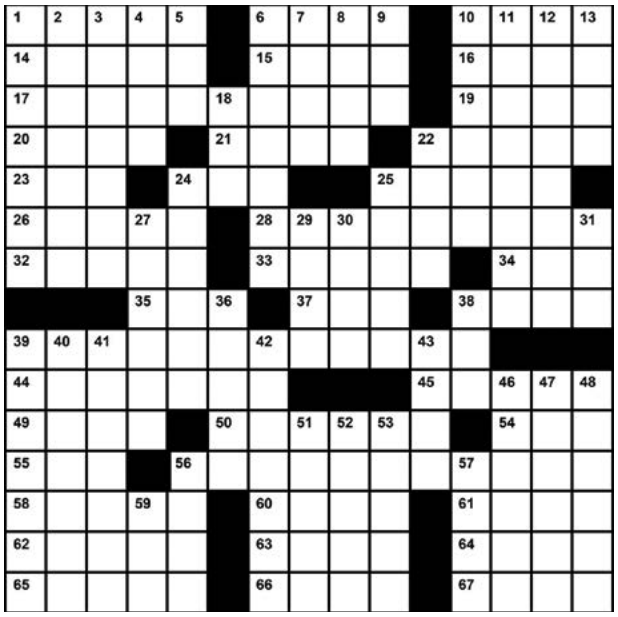

We'll Miss You, Richard

Across

1 "From Here to Eternity" actor
6 Fashion accessory for Zorro
10 "Get your rear in gear!"
14 GLAMA award, e.g.
15 Meat that goes in your boxers
16 NG: Fill with freight
17 Start of a Richard Simmons quote
19 Singer on "Lord of the Rings" soundtrack
20 "The Way We ___"
21 What we eat
22 NG: Brittany port
23 Hrs. in P-town
24 NG: Olympics chant word
25 "Streetcar" director and namesakes
26 What a queen does
28 More of the quote
32 NG: Like many a contrast
33 Blow, as dough
34 Queer body part on TV
35 Part of Q and A (abbr.)
37 NG: Note to be paid
38 NG: Ancient European language
39 More of the quote
44 NG: Ghost
45 Andrew ___ Webber
49 NG: Kind of child
50 NG: Can't help but
54 Hard top
55 NG: Verb ending
56 End of the quote
58 Kind of bear
60 Bas relief of Eleanor's husband
61 Co-founder of MGM
62 Become husband and husband on the fly
63 Alfred Douglas' school
64 "___ want is a room somewhere..."
65 NG: Antisocial elephant
66 "Atlas Shrugged" author Ayn
67 Rupert Everett's "The Next ___ Thing"

Down

1 They damage the scenery on Broadway
2 6-0 for Mauresmo
3 Staying power?
4 Spencer-Devlin's "Look out!"
5 "I'll ___ anything once"
6 Nuts
7 NG: Toward shelter
8 Swallow alternative
9 Cold-cocks
10 NG: Parsonage personage
11 Hall & Oates song about a fellator?
12 Journeys like a post-Trojan War epic
13 Straight, at the bar
18 NG: Takes too much, for short
22 NG: Ran, as colors
24 NG: Free from tangles
25 "The only horrible thing in the world is ___" (Wilde)
27 Guise for a fairy tale wolf
29 Photographer Catherine
30 NG: Brightly-colored
31 One of Freddie Mercury's pair
36 NG: Shorthand user
38 Phallic fish
39 NG: Rare North†American crane
40 He married a future queen of "Star Wars"
41 NG: Centerpiece of a holiday gathering
42 Straight
43 NG: Overwhelm with sweetness
46 Lawrence portrayer Peter
47 Sings part of "The Lonely Goatherd"
48 Cho is noted for it
51 Madonna title role
52 NG: "Buffy" extra
53 Vogue
56 Family diagram
57 Use your mouth unfaithfully
59 "The Simpsons" storekeeper

See p. 20 for answers

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◂ Pitchfork
Continued from page 24

Muna's performance at Pitchfork in Chicago came just 13 months after opening for Taylor Swift's The Eras Tour, the largest–grossing music tour ever, in the same city. Yet the energy was just as explosive as it was for a crowd of over 50,000 at Soldier Field because they seem to understand their impact and the need for artists like themselves in the limelight.

Addleman says it's thanks to LGBTQ+ musicians she even has an understanding of queerness, as she grew up in an area with very few openly gay people. With songs about the queer experience, like those sung by Muna and other artists, Addleman found the representation she didn't grow up with.

"That's how I knew I was queer — I heard about it for the first time in these songs," she said.

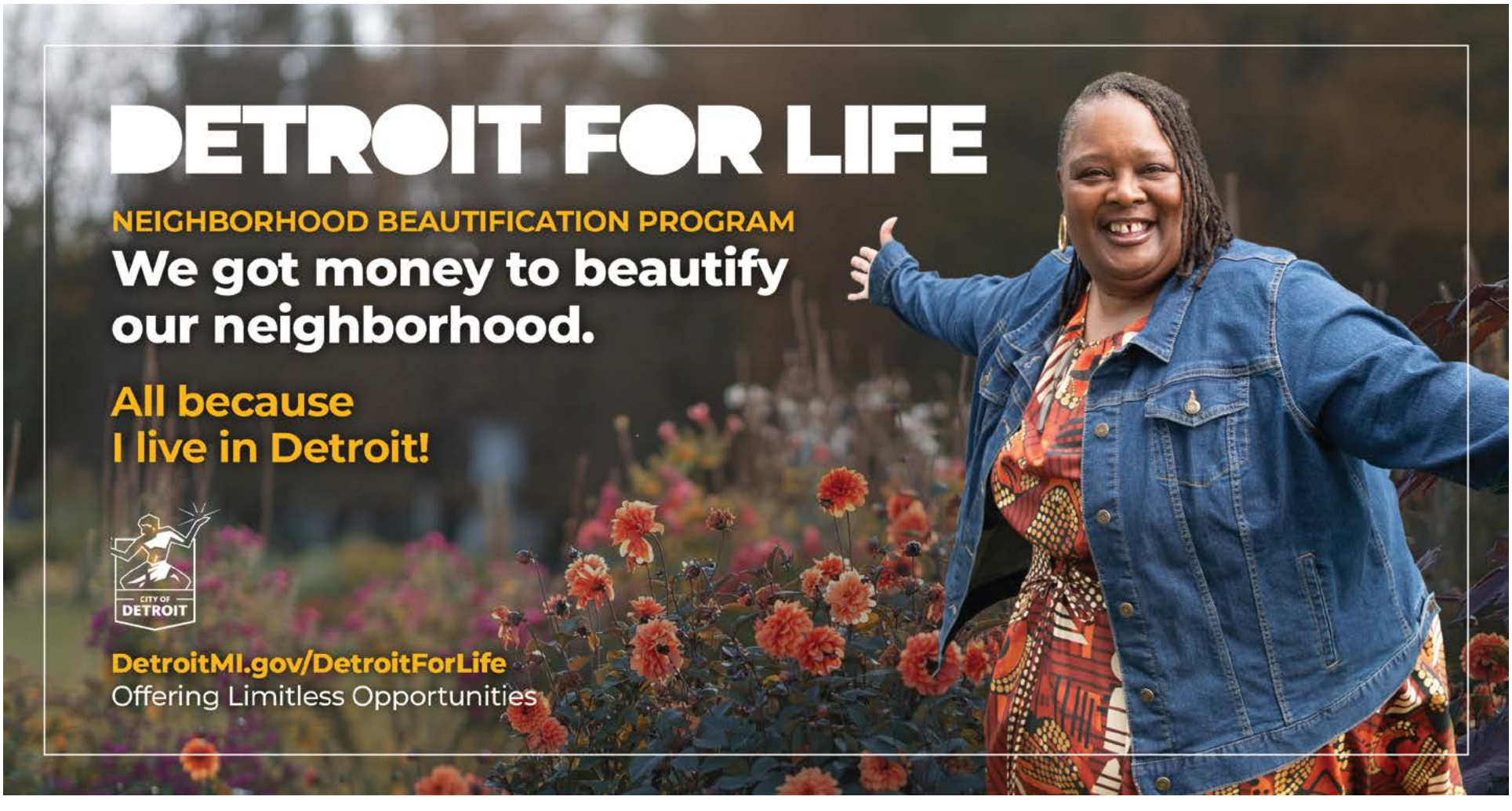
The author (right) with Abby Addleman. Photo: Jordyn Bradley

"You need that in mainstream media, then it's not taboo to talk about."

Nothing was taboo during Muna's Pitchfork set: the band dedicated their songs "Kind of Girl" to trans fans and "Solid" to "any dykes that are here tonight."

Concertgoers wore homemade and bedazzled shirts with slogans like "homo," "I heart my gf's favorite band" and "the greatest band in the world." Fans collected and connected over the shared experience of standing in the sun to secure a close spot, passing around the band's beloved inflatable horses (both named Stacy) and belting lyrics about the queer experience.

"We're a queer band that wants the revolution and we know a lot needs to change for that to happen," Gavin said at the end of their set, "but we need to find moments of joy and spaces where people come together."



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Since 1980, Be Well Medical Center has delivered compassionate, patient-centered healthcare. Led by Dr. Benson and Dr. Bornstein, our dedicated team prioritizes your well-being. As credentialed HIV specialists, we offer PrEP and Doxy PEP. Our inclusive approach ensures top-quality care for all backgrounds and lifestyles.

We are thrilled to introduce Dr. Andrew Roberts, a dedicated pediatrician specializing in care for individuals from birth to 21 years. Our clinic is now a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQ youth seeking primary care.

Dr. Andrew Roberts with a Be Well Medical Center patient.

Four Locations

Be Well Medical Center
1964 11 Mile Rd,
Berkley, MI 48072
248-544-9300

Osborn Family Medical Clinic
13560 East McNichols Rd,
Detroit, MI 48205
248-544-9300

Community Health Awareness Group
1300 West Fort St.,
Detroit, MI 48226
313-963-3434 x118

Liv Well Clinic
5103 West Pierson St.
Flint, MI 48504
810-212-0605

Dr. Benson and Dr. Bornstein

SOARING EAGLE
CASINO & RESORT

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LABOR DAY WEEKEND, AUGUST 30TH - SEPTEMBER 2ND

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